

Courthouse and Post Office
Main Street
Windsor
Windsor County
Vermont

HABS No. VT-62

HABS
VT.
14-WIND,
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

COURTHOUSE AND POST OFFICE

HABS
VT
14 WIND
5

Address: Main Street, Windsor, Windsor County, Vermont.

Present Occupant: United States Post Office, first floor.
Federal District Court, second floor.

Present Use: Post Office and Courthouse.

Brief Statement of Significance: This cast-iron frame building was designed by Ammi B. Young, Supervising Architect, Office of Construction, Treasury Department, 1852-1862, and built 1856-1859. The building is maintained in excellent and unaltered condition, and the original plans for its construction survive. It is the oldest active post office building in the United States and is typical of government architecture during this period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: United States Government.
2. Date of erection: 1856-1859.
3. Architect and builder: Ammi B. Young (1798-1874), Supervising Architect, Office of Construction, Treasury Department; A. H. Bowman, Maj., Engineers, U. S. Army, in charge of Office of Construction, Treasury Department.
4. Original plans: A copy of the original lithographed drawings is preserved in the office of the Postmaster, Tim Murphy, Windsor, Vermont. The drawings were part of a large series of drawings that was published in 1855 and 1856 under the title, Plans of Public Buildings in Course of Construction for the United States of America under the Direction of the Secretary of the Treasury. This series of drawings was widely distributed by the Secretary of the Treasury and survives in various libraries today. The Windsor Courthouse and Post Office drawings consist of twelve sheets, one of which is missing in the copy preserved by the Windsor Postmaster. Following is a list of the drawings preserved in Windsor; photocopies in this photo-data book:
 - a. Cover Sheet.
 - b. Title Sheet.
 - c. Drawing No. 1, Cellar and First Floor Plans.
 - d. Drawing No. 2, Lost (Second Floor and Attic Plans).
 - e. Drawing No. 3, Elevations.
 - f. Drawing No. 4, Sections.

- g. Drawing No. 5, Exterior Details, Profiles.
 - h. Drawing No. 6, Interior Details, Profiles.
 - i. Drawing No. 7, Door and Window Details.
 - j. Drawing No. 8, Details of Beams, Girders, etc.
 - k. Drawing No. 9, Details of Roof and Stairs.
 - l. Drawing No. 10, Details of Post Office Boxing, etc.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The building has not been altered and is maintained in excellent condition. The three-cell jail in the cellar is the only part of the building no longer serving its original purpose.
6. References:
- a. A History of Public Buildings under the Control of the Treasury Department (Exclusive of Marine Hospitals and Quarantine Stations) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), illus., pp. 592-593.
 - b. Osmund R. Overby, "Ammi B. Young in the Connecticut Valley," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, vol. XIX, no. 3 (October 1960), pp. 119-123.
- B. Supplemental Material: The following documents on the construction of the building are extracted from the annual reports of the Engineer in Charge of the Office of Construction:
- 1. A. H. Bowman, "Report of the Engineer in Charge of the Office of Construction, under the Treasury Department, September 30, 1857," Statement No. 12 in Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Year ending June 30, 1857 (Washington, 1857), First Session, Thirty-fifth Congress, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 1, pp. 90-137:

"The advantages of using iron for all purposes to which it is applicable in our public buildings, after nearly five years' experience, are fully demonstrated. The principal iron establishments in our large cities and towns have made themselves fully acquainted with the details of construction in iron, as applied to building purposes, and have provided themselves with machinery, tools, etc., for executing work promptly, and at such reduced rates as almost to bring it in competition in price with stone, brick, and wood. Where much ornament is aimed at, it can be erected in iron cheaper than in stone." /Page 92/

"The building being erected for a post office and United States courtroom, at Windsor, was commenced late in the season. The cellar is excavated, the cellar walls and partition walls up to the level for the course of cut stone, which course is laid. This building can easily be finished next season.

Total amount of appropriation. \$76,000.00
Amount expended to September 30, 1857. 5,710.48
Balance available for the completion of the work. . \$70,289.52"

/Page 111/

Windsor Courthouse and Post Office
Superintendent, Daniel C. Linsley, paid \$4.00/day
Disbursing Agent, Charles Chapin, paid \$2.50/day
Table V, page 131

Windsor Courthouse and Post Office
Total amount of appropriations. \$76,000.00
Date of purchase of site. January 20, 1857
Cost of site. \$4,500.00
Amount available September 30, 1856, with
additional appropriations \$76,000.00
Amount expended during the year ending
September 30, 1857. \$5,710.48
Amount available for the current year \$70,289.52
Date of contract. March 19, 1857
Contract time of completion July 1, 1858
Contract price for construction \$49,300.00
Table VI, page 135

2. A. H. Bowman, "Report of the Engineer in Charge of the Office of Construction, under the Treasury Department, September 30, 1858," Statement No. 10 in Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Year ending June 30, 1858 (Washington, 1858), Second Session, Thirty-fifth Congress, House Ex. Doc. No. 3, pp. 87-130:

"...the enormous consumption of iron by the government is materially promoting the general welfare of the great interest involved in its production." Page 82

"The courthouse and post office at Windsor, Vermont will probably be completed the present year. All the brick walls are built, and, with but few exceptions, the iron work all in place. The plastering of walls and ceiling is nearly finished.

"The floors will be laid, and the carpentry put in place as soon as the walls are sufficiently dried. This building, like that at Rutland, is of brick, with iron exterior ornamentation, and presents a fine appearance. Proposals have been accepted for grading and fencing the grounds, and the work will be carried on as rapidly as the weather admits. The contractor has pushed the work faithfully and vigorously since its commencement, and will, no doubt, have it completed according to the contract by the time agreed upon.

Total amount of appropriations. \$76,000.00
Amount withdrawn to September 30, 1858. 44,050.02
Balance Available \$31,949.98"
Page 91

Windsor
Superintendent, Daniel C. Linsley, paid \$4.00/day
Disbursing Agent - Department
Table 4, page 120

Windsor

Total amount of appropriations.	\$76,000.00
Date of purchase of site.	January 20, 1857
Cost of site.	\$4,500.00
Amount available September 30, 1857	
with additional appropriations.	\$70,289.52
Amount expended during the year ending	
September 30, 1858.	\$38,339.54
Amount available for current year	\$31,949.98
Date of contract.	March 19, 1857
Contract time of completion	July 1, 1858
Contract price of construction.	\$49,300.00

Table 9, page 128

3. A. H. Bowman, "Report of the Engineer in Charge of the Office of Construction, under the Treasury Department, September 30, 1859," Statement No. 13 in Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Year ending June 30, 1860 (Washington, 1860), First Session, Thirty-sixth Congress, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 3, pp. 91-138:

"I have the honor again to call your attention to the growing variety of uses for which iron is most desirable in public buildings. Every new trial suggests new uses, and the opportunity thus given to stimulate the production of this national staple, with both present and ultimate economy to the government, will not be neglected when the finances of the country shall again permit me to call your attention to the new works already authorized." Page 93

"The new courthouses and post offices at Rutland and at Windsor, Vermont, which are built from similar plans and drawings, but by different contractors, are both completed, furnished, and occupied by the postmaster of each place, and the court-rooms are ready for use whenever the courts shall be held.

"The grading and inclosing the grounds, which is a work of some magnitude at each place, is now nearly finished, and will be entirely completed, it is expected, before winter sets in. The intense rigor of the winter in this locality renders necessary a very substantial foundation and structure for all outside work, and the walls and fences have been built in accordance with such necessity.

"The buildings are built of brick, with iron doors, iron ornamental window casings, etc., and are beautiful and imposing edifices, but are largely in advance of the necessities or wants of either place, both in size and cost....

"Windsor

Total amount of appropriation.	\$76,000.00
Amount withdrawn to September 30, 1859	68,262.48
Balance available	\$ 7,737.52"

Pages 116-117

Windsor

Total amount of appropriations. . . . .	..\$76,000.00
Purchase of site. . . . .	..January 20, 1857
Cost. . . . .	..\$4,500
Amount available September 30, 1858 . . . . .	..\$31,949.98
Amount expended during year ending September 30, 1859. . . . .	..\$24,212.46
Balance . . . . .	..\$7,737.52
Date of contract. . . . .	..March 19, 1857
Contract time of completion . . . . .	..July 1, 1858
Actual time of completion . . . . .	..March 25, 1859
Contract price of construction. . . . .	..\$49,300.00
Total cost. . . . .	..\$68,262.48

[Table 8, page 136]

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby and Henry C. Edwards
Architects, National Park Service
September 1959

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is typical of Young's work in the 1850's and representative of government architecture of the period. By this time, Young's Greek Revivalism as seen in his design for the Boston Custom House (1837-1847) had been modified by the prevailing Italianate manner. The Office of Construction was promoting the use of iron, both for ornamental and structural members, at this time, which also can be seen in this building. Windsor's stable population and the generous design of the Courthouse and Post Office have allowed the building to continue serving its original purposes without additions or alterations.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is structurally sound and maintained in excellent condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular building, 79' wide x 55'. Three stories high, plus attic and cellar. Third or "half" story only at north and south ends; second floor court room at the center of the building is two stories high.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Brick masonry exterior walls; cast-iron frame interior construction.
4. Stoops: Narrow entrance stoop nearly the full length of the front of the building, up four steps, made of large blocks of cut granite.

5. Chimneys: Eight brick chimneys.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Two-leaf, two-panel entrance doors. Two entrances on front or west side in the end bays of the five-bay front. One entrance on the north side. One entrance on the back or east side. Vermiculated, rusticated doorways.
 - b. Windows: First floor, round headed, double hung, 6/6 light. Second floor, 6/6 light, double hung. Third floor, 6 light fixed. First floor window frames match doorways with vermiculated rustication. Second and third floor windows have moulded frames; the three taller court room windows on the second story, which comprise the center three bays of the front, have pediments on consoles.
7. Other exterior ornament: Moulded belt course. Quoins, vermiculated on the first story, smoothly surfaced above.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Hipped roof; corrugated, sheet-metal covering.
 - b. Cornice: Moulded cornice with modillions.
 - c. Cupola: Large wood frame cupola; single, large, louvered opening on each side with semicircular top; quoined; moulded cornice with modillions; octagonal, bell-shaped roof, surmounted by a brass eagle.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Cellar: storage rooms and unused jail. First floor: Post Office with vestibule, work area, and offices. Second and third floors: Federal court room with judges' chambers, jury rooms, offices, etc. Attic space unused.
2. Stairways: Two stairways, one in northwest, one in southwest corner of building. Cast-iron stringers, risers, treads, balusters, and newel posts with foliated and vine ornamentation. Simple, wood, moulded handrail.
3. Flooring: Shallow brick vaulted floors supported on "I" beams, brought to a level with a thin, rough, concrete slab, wood sleepers embedded in the concrete, hardwood finish flooring nailed to sleepers. Plaster ceiling hung on wood furring below. Rough concrete floor exposed in attic. Brick floor in cellar.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Two, four, and six-panel wood doors. Moulded wood doorways.

6. Trim: Moulded window frames on interior. Cast-iron transom guards. Interior supports are cast-iron columns in a modified Corinthian order. High paneled wainscoting in the court room. Round-headed, marble mantels with marble mantel shelves and incised ornamental details.
7. Lighting: Electric.
8. Heating: Originally heated by a central, hot-air system supplemented with fireplaces. Later replaced by a central heating system with radiators.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Building faces northwest on the main street of the business district in a small town.
2. Walks: Modern concrete sidewalks.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby and Henry C. Edwards
Architects, National Park Service
September 1959